

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Bear River High School
1450 South Main
Garland, Utah 84312**

April 6-7, 2004



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
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**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Bear River High School
1450 South Main
Garland, Utah 84312**

April 6-7, 2004

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate in-service growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 6-7, 2004, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Bear River High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Dale Thomas is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Bear River High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Bear River High School.

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10/30/03

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Mary Kay Kirkland	Administrative Assistant

BEAR RIVER HIGH SCHOOL
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Jim Christensen Assistant Principal
Chris Chournos Assistant Principal

Counseling

Ed Hibbard Counselor
Rex McKee Counselor
Kelli Rose Counselor

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Dixie Baster	Kris Hansen	Julie Rupp
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Jill Christensen	Dan Jensen	Judy Thompson
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Dawn Richards
Clair Schenk
Eric Stamps
Ann Swinton
Peter Watkins

Larry Webb
Gene Wilcox
Chris Wise

BEAR RIVER HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Bear River High School is to ensure that all students **achieve success**, learn to **be responsible**, and **cultivate respect** for themselves and others.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Achieve Success:

- We believe every student can develop intellectually, emotionally, physically, and socially.
- We believe in honoring ideas, exalting thought, and cultivating and fostering dreams.
- We believe literacy opens the door to success.
- We believe in creating a climate for exploration that is safe, stimulating, and inviting.

Be Responsible:

- We believe that the responsibility of education is shared among students, parents, educators, community, and industry.
- We believe every choice in life inherits its own set of consequences.

Cultivate Respect:

- We believe in celebrating differences in ethnicity, culture, learning styles and maturity.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dan Johnson, Mount Logan Middle School, Logan City School District,
Visiting Team Chairperson

Lynette Riggs, Sky View High School, Cache County School District

Jack Robinson, Mountain Crest High School, Cache County School District

George Miller, Curriculum Department, Utah State Office of Education

Susan B. Burns, Weber High School, Weber School District

Laurence O. Price, Roy High School, Weber School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

BEAR RIVER HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Bear River High School is located in Box Elder County in Northern Utah. It is a comprehensive rural 3A school with a student population of 1,034 in grades 10-12. The school serves students from Garland, Tremonton, and several other smaller communities and unincorporated areas, thus requiring a significant busing program. The school's population is relatively stable, with a slight decline in recent years. Class sizes have risen as a result of a decrease in FTEs. Most students are Caucasian, with a modest increase being seen in the Latino/Hispanic population, currently at 5.8 percent. Bear River High School's students with special needs (i.e., special education, 504, LEP, etc.) are provided with appropriate accommodations. All students can choose from a wide array of clubs, athletics, and other extracurricular activities. The school has a strong tradition of excellence in academic and athletic pursuits, and is strongly supported by the community.

The school's attendance area includes thousands of acres of agriculture and ranching land. Manufacturing, finance, construction, and education are also major sources of employment for the community.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The school's leadership team, in cooperation with several other individuals and groups, found that Bear River High School is performing at or above national and state averages in most subtests of the SAT battery. The language arts portion of the test is of concern to the school. CRT scores were reviewed course by course, and it was found that some of the scores were not at the level that the school hoped they would be. The school has instituted a remediation program to address academic deficiencies. A revealing statistic that was brought to light by the profile study is that 37 percent of the Hispanic population is failing classes, whereas approximately 11 percent of the Caucasian students find themselves in failing situations. Also, it was found that 41 percent of the failing students at Bear River High School missed seven (7) or more days of school, prompting leadership to note this as another area of concern. The school did an excellent job of finding out "who is learning and who is not" through a thorough process of disaggregating data. The profile data gathered in the school analysis was appropriately used in making plans for school improvement.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

Bear River High School did a masterful job of developing the school profile. The profile included data from the sources recommended by the USOE in the Collaborating for Student Achievement accreditation program. Since NCLB requires annual reporting of student progress for certain subgroups, it is recommended that the profile include a chart that specifically identifies these subgroups and the learning levels of students in them.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

More involvement of community members on focus groups would add greatly to the information gathered for school improvement. Bear River High School met with a certain degree of success in getting community stakeholders to attend focus groups, but some focus group leaders stated that attendance was not as consistent as they would have liked.

For example, focus group meetings regarding the “culture of continuous improvement and learning” were well attended by local staff members, but not as well attended by the community or by students. Input from the community came in the form of a survey that was sent out by mail. Survey responses indicated strong support for school improvement and professional development. The community also indicated its support of initiatives by the district to “make our schools better.” The Visiting Team recognized that even though community attendance was not strong in some cases, the focus groups were still able to gather and use valuable information in the Bear River High’s school improvement plan.

In light of the high school buildings’ age and numerous maintenance problems, declining enrollments at the school combined with declining funding (with fewer WPU’s), and out-migration from the area, it would seem appropriate for community and educational leaders to work together to address these serious issues. Such a line of inquiry could yield significant data, resulting in support for facility upgrades as well as a positive impact on instructional programs.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The school and community came together in a collaborative effort to study and write the Bear River High School accreditation document. The Visiting Team was impressed with the high level of commitment and involvement among so many faculty members and patrons. The result of the work was a strong action plan for school improvement with **student performance at the center of the**

work.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The Visiting Team felt that all those involved at Bear River High School used the accreditation process as an opportunity to take an honest look at their school and to create strategies that would make a positive difference in the future. The school has benefited greatly from the accreditation process, and is committed to using its identified strengths as a foundation for long-term school improvement.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Bear River High School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

Learning to Learn

- Students develop and use multiple learning strategies and study habits
- Students organize resources and time effectively and relate their daily activities to learning
- Students reflect on and evaluate their learning for the purpose of improvement
- Students adapt and adjust to change
- Students apply knowledge and information across all curriculum

Thinking and Reasoning

- Students gather, organize, evaluate, and apply information
- Students recognize, evaluate, and refine their thinking process
- Students balance reason and emotion in decision making

Personal and Social Responsibility

- Students take responsibility for personal actions and work effectively with others
- Students respect themselves and others and value diversity
- Students act as responsible citizens and participate in activities that promote the common good

Communication

- Students recognize, analyze and use various forms of communication
- Students communicate with others in a respectful way

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

Bear River High School effectively utilized a focus group process that involved community members, students, teachers, and staff members. The focus group used the criteria developed by the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) to examine the school's old mission statement. A major concern was the length of the old mission statement and its lack of direction for the school. In reading the current mission statement, it is evident that the goal of developing one that is clear and concise was achieved. The Visiting Team found that the focus group arrived at a consensus for the mission statement, and that the statement is widely accepted by all stakeholders. It was further discovered that students were very familiar with the mission statement, and they indicated the statement had meaning for them personally. The stakeholders interviewed by the Visiting Team felt that the new mission statement provides unification and a sense of direction for Bear River High School.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

Bear River High School should be commended for developing belief statements that are clearly student-centered. ABC—Achieve success, Be responsible, and Cultivate respect—is the cornerstone of the mission statement and is central to the beliefs that the administration and teachers support. The Visiting Team noted that these beliefs were posted in all rooms and that teachers felt that the beliefs had meaning for them in their work.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

There is a strong connection between the newly developed mission and belief statements and the school's desired results for student learning. The DRSLs are posted along with the mission and belief statements throughout the school. The teachers are developing connections through their curriculum and activities program so that the mission of the school is achieved.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

Bear River High School has just undergone an amazing learning experience. Part of the lesson learned included an epiphany concerning the significance of data collection and analysis. Numerous voices, in addition to printed data, reiterated that one newly learned lesson was about the importance of aligning curricula with the standardized/mandated tests. Special attention was directed to the Core CRTs, and, certainly, an adherence to the Core is important. In addition, the school's DRSL process and product demonstrate an intense focus on the Utah State Office of Education's Utah Life Skills. This is a great first step.

A second lesson concerns a full understanding of the term "standard" in a national sense. Paradoxically, "standard" then becomes a more specific term. Teachers and administrators must look closely at their most essential course teachings and weed out the rest. Use of a backward design model, visualizing the end—the way students will demonstrate proficiency with a concept/skill—might be useful. Focus on teaching essential concepts comes next.

This is no simple matter for Bear River High School, especially when several people teach the same course. There must be consensus on what is important—what **must** be taught/learned, how students will demonstrate proficiency, and how the teachers will support each other in re-teaching and reevaluating.

Preservation of the arts is becoming a significant issue in most schools as they move into the NCLB age, and this issue is also surfacing at Bear River High. Reading/writing/thinking across the curriculum has been a concept difficult to accept for most non-core teachers. Now it is a must.

Collaboration has recently become more of a practice at Bear River High School, and the Visiting Team heard members of each department saying they wanted it to continue in the future. Because of the accreditation process, the school has also made great strides with collaboration across the content areas. Continuing in this mode, there is ample opportunity for the Art Department to support literacy/numeracy/thinking/history efforts throughout the school and to prove their worth as core support, not a special-interest add-on. The teaming opportunities are endless.

The school is working very hard to "really" teach students at Bear River High School, and the expertise of individual teachers is impressive. This expertise needs to be utilized in finding ways to address the needs of the school's sub-group populations. Students who need special reading help, in particular, need to be identified, as do the particular skills that must be addressed. At the other end of

the scale, the upper-end students should be identified so that an appropriate curriculum can be provided. Small decisions, such as opening AP English to 11th graders, may certainly help.

The Visiting Team found that instructors feel that they have easy access to the Utah Core Curriculum and that it is frequently reviewed. Several faculty members commented that they had spent time in recent departmental meetings reviewing the core standards, and have participated in a “mapping” activity of their own lesson materials in comparison to the Core Curriculum.

One area of collaboration that will affect student performance in the future is the mathematics program. The trimester programs at the Bear River Jr. and Sr. High Schools allow for students to possibly skip a year of mathematics instruction between 8th grade and 10th grade. In light of the fact that CRT scores for Elementary and Intermediate Algebra and Geometry are low and were identified as an area of concern in the self-study, it would be prudent to arrange for coordination between the two schools to try to remedy this situation. The addition of one trimester of Applied Math and the strengthening of the Applied Math II class should prove beneficial.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Again, the first steps have been taken—Bear River High has identified directions and priorities. There is still much to do, however, to articulate answers to the questions, “How does the school incorporate DRSL instruction in the content areas?” and “How do they assess DRSLs on a school-wide basis?” This is future work for “late start” days, as is the creation of a DRSL rubric for a school-wide assessment system.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

It was evident that the professional staff has designed a variety of learning experiences for students. A number of these activities were observed by the Visiting Team, including cooperative learning, total physical response (TPR) to incorporate body movements with lesson concepts and capitalize on tactile modalities, group work, group presentations using media from posters to PowerPoint, direct instruction, Socratic questioning, use of treats to stimulate discussion and focus student attention on specific points of the lesson, storytelling (the Visiting Team commends teachers for reading stories and books to their students regardless of the subject area being taught), modeling, experiment

presentations, use of manipulatives, role-playing, and hands-on activities, to name a few. The Visiting Team encourages all teachers to continue exploration of the most effective teaching strategies possible, and to focus on those activities that engage students, as opposed to predominantly using lecture methods. The Visiting Team also saw the need for teachers to receive CRT data promptly from the Utah State Office of Education so they can prescribe appropriate learning activities to remedy areas of concern noted in the end-of-level test data. (Teachers felt they could more effectively meet the needs of students through such immediate feedback.) The Visiting Team noted that teachers must continue to focus their instructional activities on the State Core rather than on text-based curricula.

The Visiting Team noticed a number of examples of instructional technology in some classrooms, and felt that engaging activities were being presented with it. However, the technology appeared to be isolated in only a few locations in the school (the business and language arts classrooms, for example). Teachers expressed an interest in further integrating technology into their classes. The Visiting Team found that the building's infrastructure is not conducive to a building-wide computer network with multiple computers in each room; therefore, engagement through this medium is somewhat limited for the near future. (However, each teacher does have at least one computer in his or her room, which is generally used for keeping track of grades, the Internet, e-mail etc.)

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

As mentioned above, teachers use a wide variety of instructional strategies. The Visiting Team observed many research-based practices being used during a single lesson. One teacher interjected humor during an oral test in the form of extra credit questions to help ease the tension and stress that typically accompany the testing process. Students responded well to this. Teachers were aware of the need to vary activities and instructional strategies to meet the needs of the individual students in their classrooms. The Visiting Team noted that there was a very positive tone in the classrooms that were visited, and that teachers and students interacted well together. The Visiting Team commends the professional staff for creating this kind of environment.

An outstanding example of the school's effort to meet the learning needs of students is the distance-learning system (EDNET). Bear River High School's EDNET programs have been shared within the district for more than a decade, and are a mainstay of educational programs at Grouse Creek, Park Valley, Box Elder High School and, of course, Bear River High School. The Bear River High School faculty has more EDNET teachers than any other high school in the state of Utah, and is held up as an example of creative vision and administrative support for access and equity in rural schools.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

The staff felt positively about the opportunities they had to prepare for the accreditation process and to receive more in-service training. The administration's use of the "late start" schedule was extremely valuable in creating time for the school and community to work in collegial ways.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Bear River High School is moving in a positive direction. There is more teacher and cross-department discussion about teaching and learning (for example, "What are the kids learning, and how do we know?"). As yet, there is no formal school-wide assessment system besides those that are criterion- or norm-referenced. Teachers have been given opportunities recently to take a deeper look at standards and how their classroom assessments are used on a daily basis to inform instruction. This work will greatly enhance articulation of specific student achievement targets.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Without question, the entire staff and administration is aware of competency-based, standard-driven education. The Visiting Team found that teachers were intentionally designing their assessments to ensure that standards were taught to and met. This fact is reflected by the excellent job the school has done in using CRT scores and other assessments to make positive changes in the students' academic performance

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

In reality, all three of the questions concerning Quality Assessment Systems could be addressed at once. The foundation for response is essentially the same.

Bear River, assessment-wise, is where most schools are today: They have lived by SAT and ACT scores, and they obey U-PASS directives. As stated in the self-study, Bear River is especially concerned with the Core CRTs. Sadly, these tests have traditionally had to be used as school/teacher/course summative assessments because the results were (and are) so slow in coming.

All secondary schools in Utah are clamoring for timely results so that CRTs, in particular, can be used as formative assessments. Until that happens, it is up to the school to devise ways to formatively identify student needs so that appropriate actions result. Teachers seem to be relying on teacher-made assessments to serve this purpose. In addition, PLATO serves as an immediate assessment tool. Six Traits of Writing assessments also seem to be widely used.

The question remains: What other assessments are available to aid the school in this endeavor? A reading test, such as Gates-MacGinitie, may be in order. Devising teacher-generated assessments that allow students to demonstrate content/thinking proficiency of a standard is a step looming in Bear River High's future. This step can only be taken after content/learning standards are identified.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The Visiting Team noted that every classroom and office space in the school had the mission statement and DRSLs posted prominently. Teachers indicated in several interviews that administrators and teacher leaders in the school were interested in how the students were doing. Many teachers felt that the administrators were not just trying to make the school look good, but were genuinely interested in establishing a climate that fostered teaching and learning. Furthermore, teachers noted that, for example, leaders in the school were trying hard to minimize interruptions, to maximize learning time, to recognize and reward outstanding performance, and to provide instructional staff members with the resources and equipment they needed for effective instruction. The administration was straightforward in discussing its desire for learning to be the most important thing that occurs at Bear River High School.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The school's self-study was a reflection of its commitment and practice to utilize a decision-making process that is data-driven. The "best practice" of using a team and school community approach for decision making was evident to the Visiting Team. The Community Council, for example, was given a significant budget to fund the decisions it felt would improve the school. Teachers reported over and over again that the Community Council's ideas were used to formulate the school improvement plan. Practices such as this are research-based, and are proven to have long-term positive benefits for buy-in and performance.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

Bear River High School is establishing its processes for monitoring students' performance. Evidence surfaced in the school's self-study that students in certain areas were not meeting core requirements. By making several adjustments in some departments, the school managed to significantly affect student performance. The Visiting Team noted that counselors and administrators met to reflect on data, and that this data was shared with teachers. It should be noted that an atmosphere has emerged at Bear River High School in which data can be discussed without teachers fearing repercussion. The administration is to be complimented for being able to develop such a high level of trust.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The Visiting Team discovered that Bear River High School has undergone substantial changes in FTE allocation, and that the administration has skillfully distributed time and resources to maintain quality programs for all students. It is evident that facilities do not accommodate teaching and learning at the highest level, but the administration and teachers have done a wonderful job of making things work for them. The school is safe, and students like what is happening in their school.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

Sizeable amounts of money, resources, and time have been allocated for administrators, teachers, students, and the community to work collaboratively for school improvement. The mission, goals, belief statements, and DRSLs are now the central focus of everything the school does. Teachers observed that they have developed a greater understanding of how the allocation of resources helps them achieve their school's purpose. The administration has made significant strides in this area.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

All focus groups, the Community Council, and the student groups that were interviewed reported to the Visiting Team that they felt they had a voice in what the school was doing and the direction in which it was going. These stakeholders used the word "empowerment" frequently as they described the work they were

doing. Ownership of the accreditation process and hope for the future were evident as a result of the school leadership's ability to empower and trust others.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team discovered that efforts had been made to organize different committees to meet at various times throughout the year. Members included staff members from the school and invited community members. The Visiting Team did notice that students had not been included on some committees, and felt that their representation is essential to the school improvement effort. The common feeling was that meetings, whether formal or informal, were productive and helped to foster positive working relationships.

When the Visiting Team specifically asked students, staff members, parents, and administrators about school climate, it was overwhelmingly evident that a caring, cohesive, and compassionate environment has been developed, where students from all backgrounds feel comfortable and included in the school. One student commented, "I can be a drama queen and still feel I can associate with all groups and feel accepted." Another added, "I really like that we're a small school and that we all know each other. Everybody talks to everybody." A third student said, "The teachers really care. They ask you about your life and know what's going on. You don't just walk in, sit down, listen to a lesson, then leave." The same is true for the rapport felt between faculty and administration. Administrators ask, "How can we help?" rather than saying, "This is what you should do." It is evident that all stakeholders feel they are an important part of change and awareness, and that what they say matters.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Bear River High School isn't afraid to involve parents in the decision-making process. Based on comments from the Community Council, parents have been empowered to make decisions about the use of Trust Lands funds and how they may best be used for the improvement of student learning and performance. With the "late start day" (which used to come twice a month and is now once a month), the school actively demonstrates how it supports a collegial working relationship across 10-12 grades levels of education. Time is valued, staff members are treated as professionals and encouraged to use contract time to evaluate and reevaluate how the mission statement and DRSLs can be effectively addressed across the curriculum. The extra financial support provided by fundraising by community and business partners demonstrates how these groups "step up to the plate" when budget restraints from the district hurt programs for kids.

The school web site and the SIS program, which allows parents and students to access course syllabi, are evidence of other collaborative networks of support. Also available on the web site are current assignments and missed homework. If students are out of school for some reason, they are able to look up the assignments or other things they may have missed. Every classroom has a phone, which is ideal for parents who need to reach teachers and allows teachers to make phone calls without leaving their room. Other connections to the community include, but are not limited to, the PTSA, SEOP conferences, Financial Aid Night, Higher Education Day, the school newspaper, and evening programs and activities.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The Bear River High School faculty strongly supports professional development. Over the last several years the administration has actively encouraged professional development. The “late start” activities were enthusiastically spoken about. The Visiting Team was told by one teacher, “I actually used four new teaching strategies in my class this year that I learned about in the Late Start program.” Teachers commented that the principal is supportive of their professional development and encourages them to be innovative in the classroom.

Intra-departmental collaboration was observed in many of the departments. Teachers located in centralized parts of the school found that this facilitated easy access. Some teachers commented that they frequently eat lunch together and discuss class activities. For example, science teachers share a common laboratory facility and assist each other periodically with classes and activities.

Some departments commented that there was a strong desire at the school to coordinate activities across content lines. Evidence of this was seen when science classes worked with business class students and math was involved in an agricultural science class. Some students in one of the business classes had prepared several PowerPoint lessons (as a class project) for other teachers.

Teachers indicated that they were still anxious for technology-specific training in three areas: software (Excel and PowerPoint, for example), instructional design, and teaching strategies. Many faculty members commented to the Visiting Team that the district was creative and innovative with professional development activities in the past. They enjoyed activities that brought teachers together for specific content area professional development. A few teachers said that some professional development activities provided by the district do not apply to all

teachers at the school. It was felt that other staff members (secretaries, cooks, custodians, para-educators) could also benefit from periodic professional development.

The Visiting Team felt it should be noted here that members of the Utah Education Network professional development staff are willing to come to the school to provide content-specific and technology-oriented training, free. The USOE staff is also willing to assist with specialized training as desired. Numerous resources at UEN.org (lesson plans, Webquests, virtual tours, archival and webpage storage, MyUEN, etc.) are available to all teaching staff members.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

First and foremost, teachers at Bear River High School have been given the necessary time and resources to collaborate for school improvement and student achievement. Stakeholders are empowered to make decisions and to act upon them. Research-based practices for lesson design and instructional strategies have already been provided for the staff. (Once in place, content-oriented training, horizontal and vertical articulation, and other best practice training will help to create a powerful learning community at Bear River High School.)

The Visiting Team observed that a variety of teaching methods and strategies are being used in classrooms. Departments commented that data-driven decision making is being encouraged and supported by the administration. School counselors have been trained with new software to disaggregate data, test scores, etc., and are sharing that information with teachers. This support has a great impact on the conditions for productive change.

It is hoped that recent online testing for CRTs and other testing programs will enable faster turnaround time. Local use of software (COGNOS) is proving to be a valuable tool for local teachers and administrators to take remedial action for students in a timely manner. Several teachers commented to the Visiting Team that the PLATO (remedial) system is working very well. Many of the faculty members participate in tutoring in the PLATO lab each week. Several community volunteers serve there as well.

Some teachers commented that professional development activities should be strongly encouraged and supported at the beginning of the year to review the mission statement and DRSLs. Teachers want more departmental meetings to allow for sharing of instructional activities and ideas. (Teachers indicated they would greatly appreciate the opportunity to attend professional development activities without using personal leave time.) Concerns were noted that the analysis and dissemination of computerized testing data sent to the Utah State Office of Education is exceedingly slow. Implementation of the resulting changes in the local curriculum or teaching strategies often comes months later, well after

the end of that school year. As previously mentioned, another area of concern identified by teachers and the administration was that the trimester programs at the Bear River Jr. and Sr. High Schools allow for students to possibly skip a year of mathematics instruction between 8th grade and 10th grade. Coordination between the two schools has been ongoing to try to remedy this situation.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Standard I – Educational Program

This standard was met.

Standard II – Student Personnel Services

This standard was met.

Standard III – School Plant and Equipment

This standard was met.

Standard IV – Library Media Program

This standard was met.

Standard V – Records

This standard was met.

Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)

This standard was met.

Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel

This standard was met.

Standard VIII – Administration

This standard was met.

Standard IX – Teacher Load

This standard was met.

Standard X – Activities

This standard was met.

Standard XI – Business Practices

This standard was met.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

Bear River High School has created an action plan that reflects findings in the self-study, and thus will lead the school toward improvement in critical areas. The Visiting Team was impressed with the focus on a few significant areas and the inclusion of detail in the plan. It was evident that the leadership team at Bear River High School has been thoughtful in prioritizing school improvement action items.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The Visiting Team found that all stakeholders understood and supported the action plan's components. The administration has articulated follow-up strategies that ensure ongoing attention to the plan, and teachers indicated a high level of trust in their leaders to follow through. The administration expressed its confidence in the district to do whatever it could to support school improvement efforts.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The SIP contains specific plans for carrying out each component part of the improvement process. It was noticed by the Visiting Team that specific assignments have been made to individuals or groups. The concept of using implementation teams was highly regarded by the Visiting Team. Timelines and reporting methods lend a high level of credibility to the improvement plan.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team noticed “powerful teaching and learning” occurring in every department across the school. The use of research-based practices for instruction and assessment is taking root.
- Bear River High School followed the accreditation process extremely well, and as a result, it has a school improvement plan that should lead to significant changes for it in the years to come. There is absolute congruency between lines of evidence that the Visiting Team reviewed and the action plan that Bear River High School plans to implement.
- A strong sense of collegiality and collaboration has been generated at the school. Best practice research shows that a significant indicator of a school’s future success lies in the level of an organization’s ability to pull together toward agreed-upon goals. Bear River High School has truly become focused on what’s best for students.
- Students at Bear River High School are proud of their school; they feel safe, validated, included, and recognized. Teachers are to be commended for the concern they show for student achievement and success. Their ability to use data to inform instruction has grown substantially through the accreditation process, and students understand that they are the benefactors of this effort.
- Leadership has emerged at Bear River High School from students, faculty, and the community. The administrative team is to be commended for empowering others to step forward and to take responsibility in an effort to improve the school. This willingness to risk has allowed many others besides the administrators to accept ownership of the direction the school is taking.
- Implementation teams have been created for each of the goals in the action plan. This is a powerful idea that will ensure substantive and systemic change in the short term and in the long term.
- The school community (all stakeholders) is to be commended for making good use of the facilities, even though the stakeholders’ work is limited or at least somewhat inhibited by them.

Recommendations:

- A school-wide assessment system for the desired results for student learning (DRSLs) needs to be developed. It is recommended by the Visiting Team that only one DRSL be addressed at a time, and that this be phased in before the next six-year cycle is complete.
- Continue staff development programs that teach teachers how to “unpack” standards, create assessment targets, develop multiple lines of assessment, and implement powerful research-based instructional practices. The Visiting Team feels this recommendation will be the foundation for creating a powerful learning community at Bear River High School.
- As the school moves toward standards-based instruction and assessment, it follows that leaders must give consideration in the near future to a standards-based reporting system.
- Disaggregating data by NCLB subgroups is critical at Bear River High School to ensure that students in these underrepresented groups get the attention and interventions they need.
- Facilities at Bear River High School need to be addressed. At a minimum, student access to programs and services is limited, instructional efforts are affected, collaboration is inhibited, and the comprehensive nature that a 3A high school should achieve becomes very difficult to realize.